

The vexillological *modus operandi*

My process for creating a flag

Juan Artero

First of all, this is a sort of guide for my way, mine and mine alone, to create the flags I create, and how I come up with the symbology of my flags; this process may not be useful to everybody, but I made this with the hope that someone may find this useful and therefore contributes with the creation of a relevant flag to the ever-growing world of vexillology.

First of all, I think that vexillology is a very flexible science, and that it can be combined with any other interest. Be it an ideological, historical or political interest, one can expand that interest and be involved with it even more if a bit of vexillology is added to the mix. Optimally, the interest in vexillology would be accompanied by an interest in the geography, political and social worlds that surround an individual; this therefore gives you infinite possibilities for flag-making.

Honestly, vexillology is a practice that doesn't require much research. One can create an apparently 'perfect' flag with the right tools and some previous knowledge. For example, my two favourite creations, the flags of Gaucín and Chía were made because I had spent no more than one or two months in those municipalities. But I don't want this to be taken as if one can create a flag just because; what I mean is that vexillology, when compared to other practices like history or heraldry, vexillology requires far fewer knowledge other than the *modus vivendi* and the local symbology. Investigations prior to the creation of a flag should always be done about a municipality, ethnic group, ideology or even previously existing flags of the focus of your creation; and on the background about vexillology itself, so that you have those tools to finally make a truly great flag.



The two flags I'm most proud of: Gaucín and Chía respectively.

But let's not get to the truly interesting part of this paper: *How to make a flag*. I am going to be centred on the steps *previous* to the creation of a flag, as that is an even more personal process than the one I am going to describe.

1. Selection of an objective. Even before deciding how to create a flag, one must choose what the flag is going to be. Here is where the previously mentioned interests

come into play, as they simplify the process enormously. Generally I recommend looking around your environment in case a nearby locality is in need of a flag or an improvement of their current flag.

2. Investigation. Once you've taken a map and said 'Here!', it's time to get searching. Search online, if your target has any website and more importantly, if they already have symbols.
 - 2.1. Inspiration. For me this is the most important step, this is the one where you are going to get the elements that eventually are going to appear in your flag. I always investigate the history and actual heraldic state of my objective (I live in Europe and it's easier; but I can see how people in America could have it more difficult). I could go on the heraldic-vexillological relation, but let's leave it in the fact that heraldry has been far more practised historically than vexillology, leaving many more resources and symbols that we vexillologists can use in our work.
3. Creation of the flag. This is comparatively the easier step of them all, as once you've chosen your symbols, colours and have a mental image of how your flag is going to be (you haven't truly began the process of creating a flag unless you have this clear), it's a thing of putting all those things through a image editor or external website (I cannot recommend enough the website Flagmaker & Print for this step).
 - 3.1. Where do I get my flags. As I emancipated in point 2.1, most of my flags are based on previously existing heraldic resources of my objective, and I'm not afraid to say it. I call it 'amplification', and it essentially consists of taking a previously existing coat of arms and 'amplifying' it to become a flag. The visual example of the actual coat of arms and my proposal for the flag of Gaucín I think makes it clear.



In conclusion, I hope and trust that this short paper can help someone in their flag-creation process; but I must emphasise that everyone eventually must develop their own *modus operandi*, and personal style in relation to flags (like everything in life, really).

Thank you.

[Here's](#) the Spanish version of this article.

Interesting links

[Flags made in Competitions](#)

[7 fantastic flags that break every design rule |](#)

https://open.spotify.com/episode/43HGdMs7qRkMvCHailKLxX?si=13je5Wv1Tjaadb_s8vvQiQ&t=1847&context=spotify%3Ashow%3A3mOGYWykaEji9FPwjM7bmT

[Flag Maker | Design Your Own Flag – Flagmaker & Print](#)